

Psalm 16 - Success

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[0 : 00] We're going to get straight on with it. So turn in your Bibles to Psalm 16 and I'm going to read for us and then I'm going to hand over to Seth who's going to speak for us.

So on these Lord's Supper evenings, we've been looking through the Psalms and so we're up to Psalm 16. It is on page 549, if you have a church Bible, which Charleston very helpfully put out on all the chairs.

So you should have got one. Page 549, Psalm 16. A mictam of David. I will not pour out libations of blood to such gods or take their name on my lips.

Lord, you alone are my portion and my cup. You make my lot secure. The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places. Surely I have a delightful inheritance.

I will praise the Lord who counsels me. Even at night my heart instructs me. I keep my eyes always on the Lord. With him at my right hand I shall not be shaken.

[1 : 39] Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices. My body also will rest secure. Because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead. Nor will you let your faithful one see decay.

You made known to me the path of life. You will fill me with joy in your presence. With eternal pleasures at your right hand. Well, this is God's word. Over to you, Seth.

So we are going to indeed be in Psalm 16 as we just looked at. So if you do have a Bible, make sure to get it open or on your phone. Because we'll be referring back to it multiple times.

But before we start, let me pray. And then we'll get into it. Father in heaven, thank you for just the opportunity to open your word. God, thank you that it is living and active and still speaks to us today, Lord.

I pray that you would speak through me today, Father. Father, that your word would be able to minister to the people in this room. So that we can go out and be lights in a dark place.

[2 : 41] I pray all of these things in your name. Amen. Alright. Psalm 16. Let's talk about success. Success is a tricky word, isn't it?

It's only got four letters. S, U, C, and E. But it means a whole, whole lot. See, success can be the difference between a three-week holiday in the Maldives or a day trip down to Brighton.

Success can be the difference between driving a Lamborghini or taking the bus. Success can even be sometimes defined as the haves and the have-nots.

Or maybe you're not into that definition of success. Maybe you're not into the rat race or the overachieving. You're not into the high-stress situations.

Instead, maybe you would be more mindful. You would define success as understanding your surroundings. And it involves more than just achieving something.

[3 : 45] So instead, you would say, well, we each get to define our own success. If the first person that I described is your very typical finance bro that goes down to Canary Wharf and has loads of stocks and trades, then the second person I'm describing here would probably be your stereotypical yoga instructor that is very happy with, you do you as long as you recycle.

Everything will be okay. See, in the 21st century, we have many definitions for this word behind me, for the word success. But we can all pretty much agree that is the one definition that we can get behind.

As long as you are feeling fulfilled, then we would call that success. At least that's what the world would say. As long as we stay away from meaningless-ness on this side, and we are going towards fulfillment, we'll be okay.

But where does that fulfillment come from? What if you're working a dead-end nine-to-five job? Or maybe you're not working at all. Maybe you're retired. Where does that fulfillment come from?

Well, today we're going to look at a man who had all the pleasures that he could have ever wanted. He was king of Israel. His name was David. And yet, it wasn't the kingly pleasures that fulfilled him, but something far greater.

[5 : 08] So let's take a look. Let's look at verse 1, and we're going to start with the first point, which is preserved in the Lord. Verse 1 says, Keep me safe, my God, for in you I take refuge. The words keep me safe, there can also be translated as preserve.

So right from the very beginning, we're going to start, David starts, by saying the Lord is his place of refuge. The Lord is his strong tower. The Lord will not falter.

Wherever David goes, he knows that the Lord will be with him. It is security. The Lord is security for David. So you're not normally supposed to start your sermon with the punchline.

You're supposed to build up. You have this crescendo. And then finally, you build tension. You get to the end, and you give people an answer, right? If you've been at church for any amount of time, you know how this goes.

It's build, build, build gospel. That's how you're supposed to do it. But that's not what David does, right here in the Psalms. He starts at the very beginning of this Psalm, saying, I want you to see how this is possible.

[6 : 18] I want you to know what I am saying here is indeed possible. It's not possible because I'm a king, and I have a lot of money.

It's not possible because I wake up at 5 a.m., do an ice bath, and drink a matcha. None of that is what makes this possible. See, David can have success, feel fulfilled, because he has been preserved in the Lord.

How has he been preserved in the Lord? That's what the question that we should be asking is. And as I was dwelling on this question this week, it brought back a memory. How many of us in the room, show of hands, were lucky enough to meet our great-grandparents?

I remember being able to meet my great-grandparents. I met three of them. And I remember a few things about them. Two really stand out in my mind.

One, my great-grandmother Archer, she had a smell. Now, notice I said a smell. She didn't smell. But she had a smell.

[7 : 24] I remember distinctly, to this day, 20 years later, after I gave Grandma Archer a hug, my nose would kind of tingle a little bit. The other thing that I remember about my great-grandparents is that they had this huge walk-in pantry.

And once you got into the pantry, if you looked on the back wall, from the floor to the ceiling, I kid you not, were tinned vegetables. When I was five years old, I could have sworn they were 10 feet tall.

And what these tinned vegetables were, were a way for my grandparents to preserve fruits from their garden. See, they were pretty prolific gardeners.

They would plant every year. They would have fruits and vegetables that would come in harvest time. But if you've ever gardened at all, you know that very quickly, you go from having zero fruit and zero vegetables, to all of a sudden, you're blessed with 120 courgettes all at once.

And I don't know about you, but I don't eat 120 courgettes in a year, much less in a month before they go bad. And so, how do you keep them from going bad?

[8 : 40] You would jar them, and you would preserve them. See, that's what my grandparents were doing, is they were jarring these courgettes, jarring their fruits, jarring their vegetables, so that they could have them and extend their usefulness.

See, their usefulness would go from lasting a very short time to really lasting years. That's what David is saying right here at the beginning of this psalm. See, we are the vegetables in this illustration.

We need to be preserved. If we are left to our own devices, we will rot. Yes, we will look good for a time. We will look juicy and succulent for a time.

But there will come a time as well when we rot or when we're eaten by foxes. And we will no longer be useful. Instead, we need to be preserved.

But how? Now, I want to start right here by saying you can push illustrations too far. All illustrations have a breaking point, okay? And I want to tell you that we are pushing this illustration about as far as I am comfortable pushing it right here, okay?

[9 : 52] But I think this will be really helpful in helping us understand what David is trying to get at right here at the beginning by going just a little bit farther. So from the beginning, do you remember how I said, I don't even actually know if I've even said it, but how you preserve vegetables.

So you preserve vegetables by applying an intense amount of heat to remove toxins. And so these toxins go in, they get rid of the imperfections, and then once you get rid of the imperfections, you seal that jar.

It requires heat. Now what would happen in our hypothetical here if I took the courgettes and I just threw them in the boiling water? Well, you, me, and everybody else would be having courgettes for the next week because they would be cooked, right?

If courgettes would no longer be preserved, they would be cooked, you'd have to eat them before they went bad, which would maybe be a few days. Instead, if you're going to preserve them, what do you need?

You need a jar. Something that's going to stand between the heat and the vegetables that takes the heat but keeps the vegetables from cooking.

[11 : 15] See, in this illustration, again, you can push illustrations too far, Jesus is the jar. See, in this illustration, he took the wrath of God, the heat, if you will, and that we deserved, and yet, he kept us.

And so now we are preserved because of him. See, David starts off his psalm by saying, this is good news.

We are safe because we have been preserved. We are safe because God is our refuge. He is the one that has done it. Nothing that we could do, we would rot without God. And one of the best things about this illustration as well is that once you are preserved, the jar never leaves the vegetables either, right?

It's always with them. So once you have been preserved, David then will go on, so let's move on to the second point, and that preservation will overflow into something that is counter-cultural.

That was the heat. Point number two is contentment in the preservation. So we've established that preservation is necessary. David is saying that our preservation now should overflow into contentment.

[12 : 39] Look back at the verses with me. Verse two, he says, apart from you, Lord, I have no good thing. Verse five says, you are my portion and my cup. Verse eight says, I will keep my eyes always on the Lord.

David says, it doesn't matter what is happening around me. I will be content in the Lord. He makes this very apparent if you look at verse five. David is saying, Lord, you are my portion.

You are my cup. You are the only need for me to survive. You're the only thing I need for survival. See, this is counter-cultural, right?

David is choosing to be sustained by the Lord instead of looking for the things of the world. And let's not kid ourselves.

See, David had other options to be fulfilled in, right? He was the king of Israel. He could have had his choice of worldly pleasures. But David, in this psalm, is saying, no, no, no, I do not need more land.

[13 : 42] I do not need more mythical stories told about my greatness. I don't need better clothes. I don't need a bigger palace. What I need, what can sustain me in what I am doing only comes from the Lord.

And one of the more famous psalms in the hymns of the psalms is Psalm 119. It says, the word of the Lord is a lamp unto our feet and a light unto my path, right?

If you need to be able to see 50, 100, 150 meters ahead of you, you don't need a lamp. You need a spotlight, right? That's the only way that you're going to see.

What does a lamp illuminate? It illuminates the area right in front of you, right around you. So David is saying in Psalm 119 and here in Psalm 16, it doesn't matter what is happening around me, I can't see it.

I'm holding up a lamp. What I can only see and what only matters is what you have provided before me. I will be content in those circumstances, Lord. It doesn't matter how the world defines success, it doesn't matter even the persecution that I might come under.

[14 : 56] The world doesn't matter, but the word of the Lord does. So are you going to be content in what the Lord gives you?

Or do you want to fall into the trap of what the world wants? See, we've already talked about the world has a different definition of success than we do as Christians, right?

But it's really easy to sit in here on Sunday night and think of the world as something out there, something that doesn't really affect us. But if I can, for just a second, let me bring the world just a little bit closer.

Christian, in the room, are you content where you are at in your life right now? Are you content with the flat that you are in? Are you content with the money in your bank account? are you content with the job that you do or do not have? To keep on taking it a little further, parents, are you content with how your children are turning out?

[16:03] Spouses, are you content with your other spouse? Now, please hear me. This is not a license for us to be lazy and call it contentment.

See, Paul, the Proverbs, multiple other spots speak out some strong words against laziness. This is not license to be lazy. Raising kids, earning money, living life in London is hard work.

It takes diligence. But if you put in the hard work of raising kids, of doing your job, are you content with the results that come?

And I can't tell you the amount of time that you need to spend with the Lord or the amount of time you need to spend with your kids. That's legalism. I can't do that. That's between you and the Lord. But what I can say is that real trust, real contentment comes when we trust the Lord. So we have two options.

[17:05] We can buy in to what the world is trying to tell us. to become consumeristic, if you will, discontent, to where we have a desire for more and more and more until it becomes almost insatiable and we collapse under the weight of those desires.

Or are we going to be content in the Lord? David in this psalm had his answer. What's ours going to be?

finally, let's move on to the last point as we move towards a close here. We'll talk about rejoicing. This is the fun part.

Let's look at verse nine. David says, Therefore, my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices. My body also will rest secure because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will let your faithful ones see decay.

You make known to me the path of life. You will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand. after finding refuge and preservation in the Lord and then being content in that preservation, now David gets to the fun part.

[18:21] Now David rejoices. See, David is celebrating. If you look back at verse four, he's celebrating because he's not like those people in verse four.

He doesn't run towards other gods. Instead, he has found contentment and his joy in the Lord. not only that, he's found blessings and eternal pleasures at God's right hand.

That's what he's saying. This is the party at the end, right? This is the celebration. This is the happily ever after. This is what David's struggle has all been for for his entire life.

This is the celebration. This is what he's deserved. If you think about in our terms, this is the party after you've gotten a promotion, or this is the party once you've graduated.

This is the prize at the end for your struggle. Or is it? See, David lists some criteria, some entry requirements, a dress code, if you will, for entering this party.

[19:24] In verse eight, he says, I keep my eyes always on the Lord. Was this true of David? Has he always?

Kept his eyes on the Lord? If you know anything about the Bible, you're probably familiar with King David's story. He was picked as special from a very young age. The youngest of eight brothers, he was anointed as king while he was still watching sheep.

While he was still quite young as well, he went out to battle and fought a giant and won. His name is synonymous with underdog stories to this day.

And then when he finally did become king, he pushed Israel's borders to the largest they had ever been. And yet, if you looked at David's rap sheet, he would not pass the DBS to be hired here at West Kilburn.

You would not trust your kids with him. Adulterer, murderer, liar, all accurate descriptors of king David.

[20 : 35] And yet, how does he get to rejoice at the end? Why is he enjoying the blessings of the saints? Look at verse 6. That's the key to understanding this.

David says there's a delightful inheritance. What's significant about an inheritance? inheritance. But you get an inheritance when someone dies.

See, when most people die, they have a will, and they get to determine where their earthly treasures go. John gets the car, Bridget gets the house, et cetera, et cetera. If you fast forward a thousand years from King David, there has just been a death.

A carpenter was crucified on a cross outside of Jerusalem, and most people thought it was no big deal. But instead of business returning as back to usual, there's been a disturbance.

And a man who's been accused of being drunk at 9 a.m. stands before a crowd and proclaims these words. Fellow Israelites, listen to this.

[21 : 43] Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs, which God did among you through him as you yourselves know. This man was handed over to you by God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge, and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross.

But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.

David said about him, this should ring familiar, I saw the Lord always before me, because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore, my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices.

My body also will rest in hope, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, you will not let your holy one see decay. You have made known to me the path of life, you will fill me with joy in your presence.

Fellow Israelites, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day, but he was a prophet, and he knew that God had promised him an oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne.

[22 : 56] Seeing what was to come, he spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, that he was not abandoned to the realm of the dead, nor did his body see decay. God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it.

See, Peter, when he looks at Psalm 16, he says, yes, in order for us to have an inheritance, there has to be a death. But who can go and gain all the treasures of heaven in order to give us the inheritance?

It had to be God himself. It could only be God himself. So he sent his son to live the life we couldn't live, and then he died a death that we should have died.

He took God's wrath for our sin, and he gave us God's grace, that he had earned, in order that we could inherit eternal life with him.

Peter is saying, look, Psalm 16, it's not talking about David. See, we already know David had sinned, so it couldn't obviously be talking about him. But on top of that, Peter says, look, David's dead.

[24 : 07] There's a tomb in the city right here where we are at. We can go point to the body. But David was a prophet. he saw someone coming in the future, and in Psalm 16, he points us to the greatest inheritance ever, Jesus Christ.

All we have to do is believe. believe. I am constantly amazed at the Bible. The way that the Spirit speaks through the Word of God consistently blows me away.

How all of these things, thousands of years apart, can connect. Mind-boggling. God is going to I believe today the Spirit was ministering to you as you heard me talk, as he was ministering to me when I was writing these words.

So the question remains, what are we going to do about it? Maybe you need to go home and meditate on the fact that you've been preserved. You're a vegetable. the fact that the Lord cares and protects me leaves me speechless when I actually stop and think about it.

Or maybe the Lord has been working on your heart when we talked about contentment. Maybe you need to go home and pray that the Spirit would change the desires of your heart.

[25 : 40] Or maybe the reality that there is a party at the end of your life and you do not meet the criteria to join has really hit home for you today. Maybe you have the realization that you really do need Jesus.

Do not fight it. Give your life to Jesus. Let him change you today. Wherever you are on this spectrum, what a beautiful opportunity we have today as we take the Lord's Supper to remember the sacrifice that Jesus made for us, but also so we can join in the celebration of what that sacrifice means for us.

Remember, everyone out there is going to want you to define success for your life, but contentment and fulfillment can only come when we lean into God's definition of success.

Let's pray. Father, thank you for today. Thank you just for your word that speaks, God. Thousands of years from when these words were spoken, you are ministering to us today in a city that these people didn't even know existed, God.

You're bringing the word to our city, Lord. We want to be a part of it. So help us to define success not by how people out there want us to define it, but how you define it here in your word, Lord.

[27 : 14] Help our priorities to look so strange to people out there that they just count us as weird and those Christians. God, I pray that we would be on fire for you, that we would share and show that true contentment and true success is knowing you and making you known.

Pray all of these things in your name. Amen. Amen.